

THE PHILADELPHIA

'Anastasia' New Walnut Offering

"ANASTASIA" a new play by Marcelle Maurette, English adaptation by Guy Bolton. Presented by Elaine Ferry, directed by Alan Schneider, production designed by Ben Edwards. Presented, prior to Broadway, at the Walnut Street Theater last night, with the following cast:

Conciliator Driville	Carl Low
Varya	Bettyon Durr
Cherov	Boris Tumarin
Felzerov	David J. Stewart
Anna	Vivian Lindfors
Serge	William Cullen
Charwoman	Vivian Nathan
Stitch Driver	Stuart Germain
Dr. Benensky	Michael Strong
Dowager Empress	Russie Leontovich
Baroness Livenbaum	Dorothy Patton
Prince Paul	Hurd Hatfield

By HENRY T. MURDOCK

It has been so long since a "masque of kings"—even of kings of dubious authenticity—has been played on the stage, that the re-appearance of royalty proved an exciting experience at the Walnut last night where "Anastasia" made its debut.

The royalty concerned are the Romanoffs, no less, and some of them pedigreed. The conflict in the drama comes from the claims made in behalf of a member of the clan who is alleged to be a survivor of the grim cellar massacre of the Czar and his family back in 1918.

STIRRING ENTERTAINMENT

This play, fashioned by Guy Bolton from an original by Marcelle Maurette which enjoyed success in London, probably comes under the classification of melodrama. It is filled with low conspiracy and high speeches but both are accomplished so well that melodrama, often neglected these days except by the movies and TV, emerges as stirring stage entertainment.

The high speeches come from two accomplished Continental actresses. One is the veteran Eugenie Leontovich, who has returned after a long absence to play the Dowager Empress of all the Russians (bonded variety). The other is the breathless-voiced Viveca Lindfors, who portrays the ex-waif with a photographic memory and a quick student of facts who may or may not be a Romanoff missing for eight years.

SPONTANEOUS APPLAUSE

At the end of the second act scene between these talented actresses, the audience burst into spontaneous applause, perhaps a little surprised at the skill with which lines of emotion and sentiment can be delivered.

As for the low conspirators — they, too, are clever in the persons of an ex-Cossack officer (Joseph Anthony), and ex-Moscow banker (Boris Tumrin), and an ex-artist (David J. Stewart), who encounter a suicidal waif in Berlin, hear a strange story which they do not believe, but scent a fortune in passing off Anna (Miss Lindfors) as the Princess Anastasia, miraculously saved from murder.

It takes a little while for the conspiracy to build, but the schemers work well, with some notable assistance from Anna. So notable that, like the crooks in "The Miracle Man" of years ago, they are shaken themselves as truth and knowledge come to light at unexpected times.

GENERAL THEME

That, of course, is the general theme of the play. Is Anastasia an impostor . . . and how will she react to the responsibilities of royalty? We think you'll like the way the question is poised and resolved.

In addition to the players named, there's a good job from Hurd Hatfield, whose love and loyalty is tinged a bit by the prospect of the money his Uncle Nicholas had stashed away in various banks. As a charwoman who is convinced, Vivian Nathan has a touching scene, and Michael Strong excellently plays a suitor of Anna, not Anastasia.

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